



RETIREE



TIMES

**A publication of the
Vandenberg AFB
Retiree Activities
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ATWIND Pays Off Twice

Congratulations to Lt. Rick Palmer, USAF (left), 30th Medical Group who was the \$100 winner in the current ATWIND contest at Vandenberg AFB. Palmer is the Project Officer for the 2003 Vandenberg AFB Retiree Appreciation Day and has generously donated his winnings for use on the Retiree Appreciation Day event to be held Nov. 15, 2003. Thanks so much Lt. Palmer, your generosity means a



RAO Photo

great deal to us. Retired Navy Captain Cy Buehler, Supply Corps, Retiree Activities Office director is shown accepting the \$100 Gift.

Combat-Related Special Compensation effective now

Combat-Related Special Compensation was enacted by Congress as part of the Fiscal Year 2003 Defense Authorization Act. The new special compensation became effective May 31, 2003. Payments for retirees qualified on that date will accrue retroactive to June 1, 2003.

To be eligible, a military retiree must have at least 20 years of active duty or a combination of active duty and Reserve points equaling 20 years of full-time active duty (7,200 points). Automatic qualifiers include any military retirees with at least 20 years of service and rated as at least 10 percent disabled by injuries related to the award of a Purple Heart, or a disability rating of 60 percent or higher for other illnesses or injuries attributed to combat, combat-oriented training, or hazardous duty is required.

Those qualifying may be a larger number than the term "combat-related" may imply. According to the legislation, combat-related disabilities may result from injuries that are a "direct result of armed conflict;" that result from the performance of uniquely hazardous military duties, were incurred while serving in "conditions simulating war" or are injuries incurred "through an instrumentality of war."

Service reviews will determine which disabilities, if any, are combat-related or are the result of an injury for which the member was awarded a Purple Heart. It will be

presumed that disabilities awarded VA disability compensation based on service-connected exposure to hazards, which are clearly combat-related, are combat-related for the purpose of CRSC. These include Agent Orange, Gulf War illnesses, Radiation Exposure, Mustard Gas and Lewisite. Post-traumatic Stress Disorder will require combat-related documentation.

CRSC is not granted automatically. Retirees who believe they are eligible must apply for the benefit. To view the official DoD guidance, go to <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/crsc/>

Some retirees are authorized Special Compensation for Certain Severely Disabled Retirees (\$50-\$300/mo) under a previous law. Applicants can't receive both Special Compensation and CRSC. On your application form, DoD explains that the Finance Center will automatically choose whichever of the two payments is greater. If the applicant would prefer the other compensation, the Finance Center should be advised within 45 days of notification of the award.

Payments will equal the amount of the Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation (veteran alone rates) for combat-related disabilities, but will be reduced for those retirees whose retired pay exceeds what they would have received

See Combat Page 3

New base commander arrives

Colonel Frank Gallegos recently relieved Colonel Robert M. Worley II as the commander of the 30th Space Wing and the Western Range at Vandenberg AFB.

Gallegos was commissioned in the Air Force in 1981 after graduating from the Air Force Academy. Since then, he has served in various operational assignments, and has performed staff duties at Headquarters, U.S. Air Force; Strategic Air Command and on the Joint Staff. Gallegos also served as the Executive Officer to the Vice Commander of Air Force



30th SW Photo

Col. Frank Gallegos, USAF

Space Command and has commanded the 12th Missile Squadron, Malmstrom AFB, and the 90th Operations Group, F.E. Warren AFB, his previous assignment.

A graduate of the Air Force Academy with a bachelor's degree in geography, Gallegos holds a master's degree in airpower from the Air University in addition to a master's degrees in national security and

strategic studies from the Naval War College and in management from Lesley College. (Source: 30th SW Website)

ATWIND: Get Into It!

Air Force Space Command's summer promotion, *Around The World In Ninety Days*, or ATWIND, is a virtual adventure around the world. The player's "mission" is to travel from one landmark destination to another. Players earn travel miles every time they participate in an ATWIND event.

It doesn't cost anything to play, and enrolling doesn't put you on any telemarketing lists. For a full list of rules and where you can get game pieces, go to the 30th Services Squadron website at <http://www.30svs.com>. Weekly schedules of ATWIND events at Vandenberg are published in the *Space and Missile Times*.

Participating bases compete for special recognition and prize awards totaling \$100,000. The Space or Air Mobility command base with the most participants will get \$25,000 to put into quality of life improvements for the base. Players need to play at least two times to contribute to-

ward Vandenberg's chance to win the \$25,000 in quality of life money.

Over 11,000 instant prizes will be awarded. There are \$100 guaranteed weekly winners and a \$1,000 monthly winner at base level. There's more! Thousands of additional

prizes like T-shirts, \$5, \$10 and \$20 Services Certificates will be awarded.

There are five destinations and five separate Grand prize drawings with second and third place

drawings for each destination. Grand prizes include Colorado vacations for two at Vail and increasing cash prizes for each succeeding destination. The fifth grand prize is a vacation for four and \$5,000.

We encourage all retirees, their family members and military widows who haven't entered to start playing. If you do not have a computer and do not want to use the toll-free number listed later, the Retiree

See ATWIND Page 3



Director's Corner

**By CAPT. CYRIL BUEHLER,
SUPPLY CORPS, USN (Ret.)**

Retiree Activities Office Director

We invite you to become acquainted with our Retiree Activities Center, located just across the entrance of the Home and Garden Store in the Base Exchange Complex. You might be surprised at what we have to offer!

Did you know that we have five DSL online computers for your use? We also provide information on healthcare and our knowledgeable volunteer staff is always available with friendly assistance and advice.

We welcome comments regarding retiree activities. If you're interested in forming book clubs, board/card games, art shows or other events, just contact us . . . we'll make it happen.

Whether you choose a quiet respite relaxing in our comfort-

able lounge watching the giant TV, or partaking of coffee and cookies, you'll always find a warm welcome at the Retirees Center. Except we request you save the nap . . . for that you'll have to stay at home.

We're already planning for the 2003 Retiree Appreciation Day, which will be at the Pacific Coast Club on Vandenberg AFB on Saturday, Nov. 15, 2003.

This much-anticipated annual

event is appreciated by area retirees who take advantage of the many informational lectures and topics pertaining to retirees. In the past, over 700 retirees have availed themselves of the many activities offered for the Retiree Appreciation Day. Our fall issue of the *Retiree Times* will keep you apprised of the events occurring during the 2003 Retiree Appreciation Day. We hope to see YOU there! Comments and/or suggestions are welcome for improving the event. Send your comments by postal mail, e-mail (addresses on page 2) or call Lt. Palmer at 606-1959 or Capt. Buehler at 606-5474. (Marilyn Dover Benson contributed to this article)



RAO Photo

Cy Buehler

Volunteers thanked

Thanks to all the volunteers who have contributed their valuable time to the operation of the Retiree Activities Office during the past year. We apologize if we left anybody off this list.

Juanita Anderson	Pat Nuth
Richard Barkley	Harlan Oakes
Marilyn Dover Benson	Vernor Siebert
Charles Brown	Wray Stitch
Harold Davidson	John Stone
Robert Eastwood	George Tallent
Faye Gillis	Hugh Thompson
Mary Hale	Mavis White
Peggy Kizziah	Elfriede Wittwer
John McGraw	Annabelle Wood
Francis MacKenzie	Glenn Wood

Help Wanted

We are looking for volunteers to help us in selecting, researching and preparing articles to be included in our quarterly newsletter, the *Retiree Times*. Maintaining our mailing list is another of our tasks. When you volunteer, you become a full-fledged member of Team Vandenberg. If you have minimal computer savvy and a good working knowledge of Windows, you will be eligible to take a variety of courses at the Vandenberg computer training facility free of charge. Courses offered include those in Word, Access, Excel, Power Point, Front Page Publisher and others. For further details, contact Cmdr. Gustafson or Capt. Buehler at 805 606-5474, or you can email us at retirees.office@vandenberg.af.mil.

Commissary Survey

The Defense Commissary Agency's Consumer Awareness Team has produced a short survey to gain more insights into the attitudes and demographics of DeCA shoppers and non-shoppers. The survey is in a postcard format that can be picked up in each store, but the survey can also be taken online at <http://catsurvey.shortsurveys.com>.

catsurvey.shortsurveys.com.

To entice participation, the CAT has funded a total of 250 commissary gift certificates of \$50 each for random draws (both online and postcard included in the drawings) from among the survey participants. The survey is being taken between now and mid-September. (Source: AFRN)

Commissary Update

Commissary Service will improve on July 31 when the Mini-Com will close for the last time and the main Commissary changes to an extended seven day a week operation. The main store will open on Mondays from 0930-1900 and will stay open an extra hour each day. For more information call Paige Zuniga, 734-3354, ext. 225. (Source: Base Bulletin)

Pharmacy toll-free number

The Vandenberg Clinic Pharmacy now has a toll-free number, in addition to the regular number (805) 605-0200, for use in calling for prescription refills. The number is (877) 826-3979.

The 734-1155 number is no longer in use. Pharmacy customers are reminded that the clinic pharmacy is closed the last Thursday of each month. (Source: S&MT)

RETIREE TIMES

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Retiree Activities Office Administration

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The appearance of advertising in the publication, including any inserts or supplements, does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense, the Department of the Air Force, or Lompoc Record Publications, of products or services advertised. Everything advertised in this publication shall be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national

origin, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation or any other non-merit factor of the purchaser, user or patron.

Non-advertisement content is compiled from various sources by the Vandenberg Retired Activities Office. Even though reasonable effort has been made to assure the accuracy of the contents, no guarantee of such accuracy is made nor should be assumed. Direct questions on the various topics to the agencies and phone numbers listed in the articles. All photographs, unless otherwise indicated are RAO or Air Force Photos.

Publication deadlines are the 15th of March, June, September and December. The Retiree Activities Office reserves the right to edit all submissions for style and space. Send submissions to 30SW/CVR, 747 Nebraska Ave., Suite A200, Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437-1461 or via facsimile to (805) 606-0437. The phone number is (805) 606-5474. Email may be addressed to retirees.office@vandenberg.af.mil.

Commissaries change coupon rules

The Defense Commissary Agency started enforcing a new policy June 1 that limits coupon use to only one per item unless otherwise specified on a coupon. The number of coupons a customer can use per item will be limited to what is specifically stated on the coupons. If the coupons state more than one per item can be used, then they will be accepted. If it doesn't, commissaries will accept only one per item.

The revised DeCA policy more accurately reflects manufacturers' intent for coupon use, which has

always been one coupon per item unless otherwise stated. DeCA policy had allowed commissaries to accept multiple coupons unless specifically stated as only "one per item."

Under the new policy, customers can still take advantage of multiple couponing, but only through sales specifically allowing the practice. Customers can watch for advertising and in-store flyers to learn about these sales, and manufacturers will continue to provide coupons in the stores. (Source: DeCA)

ATWIND from Page 1

Activities Office can put you in the game using the RAO computers. Even if it is something that you are not interested in personally, if you enter, it counts towards Vandenberg competing with other bases for the greatest number of people entered.

Volunteers in on-base programs earn game pieces in the following amounts based on the number of hours volunteered during the month:

- ♦ 34 or more hours volunteered per month earn 5 game pieces
- ♦ 24-33 hours volunteered per month earn 3 game pieces
- ♦ 12 -23 hours volunteered per month earn 1 game piece

Participants can register by calling (888) 597-9960 and following the interactive recorded instructions, or by accessing the ATWIND website at <http://www.atwind.com>. During enrollment you will create your Personal Identification Number by entering your birth date in dd/mm/yy format plus the last four digits of your Social Security Number. That will be your unique PIN number. Be careful to enter the same PIN each time you log in to play.

Participants will be asked for a home phone number for contact

purposes. They should be aware that in the event of winning an award and they are not able to be contacted, their prize may be awarded to a selected alternate. Participants will also be asked to provide their status for historical purposes.

After registering and creating

your PIN, you will enter your game piece number. Use 9999-2003-999 for your first game piece number. Subsequently, the participant registers additional game piece numbers

earned using the telephone number or web site noted above.

The more events participated in, the more miles accumulated, the better the participants chances of winning one of the grand prizes along the way. The contest period ends 11:59 p.m., Sunday, Aug. 31, 2003. All entries must be received by that time. (Compiled from 30SVS, ATWIND & other websites)



Combat from Page 1

for length of service. Payments are limited to the amount of the retired pay reduction resulting from receipt of VA disability compensation for qualified disabilities.

CRSC will be deposited to the same account as retired pay. In the event a VA disability compensation offset exceeds retired pay, CRSC will be deposited in the account where the VA payment is deposited. The payment is considered tax exempt pending a review by the Armed Forces Tax Council.

Payments are retroactive to June 1 for those whose disability occurred before that date. Dependents are not factored into determining the amount of the monthly payment. The compensation is payable only to those considered disabled by the VA. CRSC payments will equal the amount of VA compensation received for Purple Heart-related disabilities or combat-related disabilities minus any additional compensation received for dependents.

Retirees must apply to their own branch of service using DD form 2860, Application for Combat-Related Special Compensation. Each Uniformed Service will review the applications of their own retirees, with the Department of the Navy reviewing applications for both the Navy and Marine Corps. Payments will be retroactive to June 1, 2003, for all approved applications, no matter when received, to the extent allowed in law and providing the applicant is otherwise qualified. Depending on the number of applicants, approval could take months.

CRSC applies to retired members of any Uniformed Service, including retired members of the Coast Guard, the Commissioned

Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Public Health Service.

An application form is available at the website: <http://www.defenselink.mil/prhome/docs/form.pdf>. The form can be completed online and then printed for submission by mail with supporting documentation. The several services and many military associations have the form available on their websites. The form is also available at the Retiree Activities Office or by calling one of the toll-free phone numbers listed later. The addresses to which the applications are to be mailed are listed on the form.

Appropriate supporting documentation includes, but is not limited to the following:

- ♦ DD Form 214, Certificate of Release from Active Duty
- ♦ AF Form 356, Findings and Recommended Disposition of USAF Physical Evaluation Board
- ♦ Retirement orders
- ♦ Purple Heart citation and orders
- ♦ Any documentation indicating combat-related findings
- ♦ Assignment/TDY orders
- ♦ Medical records
- ♦ Any VA disability rating decisions made within the last year

The Department of Defense is asking potential applicants NOT to request supporting documents from the National Personnel Records Center or the Department of Veterans Affairs. DoD has made separate arrangements with these agencies to obtain needed documentation on an expedited basis. Retirees can help speed decisions by attaching copies of documents they already have in their possession, but individual requests for records (which normally take months) will only add to the record centers' workload and delay the process.

Retirees will be informed of denied applications and the reason for denial. They may reapply later if they are able to show they meet the program criteria or appeal the decision if they believe their disabilities were combat-related, but were denied compensation by their Service.

Retirees with questions about the form or benefit can call toll-free to the following numbers:

- ♦ Army (866) 281-3254
- ♦ Navy and Marine Corps (877) 366-2772
- ♦ Air Force (866) 229-7074
- ♦ Coast Guard (800) 772-8724

The Navy Council of Personnel Boards maintains an information web site (<http://www.hq.navy.mil/ncpb>) with details on eligibility, obtaining an online application and tips for applying for the benefit.

(Compiled from ANS, AFPC, FRA and other websites)

At the June potluck



RAO Photo

Charlie Guzman, representative of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Barbara County, speaks with retirees at the RAO June potluck meeting. Guzman said the life experience of military retirees and widows make them ideal candidates for participation in the program.



RAO Photo

Col. Frank Gallegos, 30th Space Wing commander, enjoys lunch at the RAO. Shown (left to right) are Col. Wayne E. Louis, 30th Space Wing vice commander and Col. Gallegos with Harlan Oakes and Chuck Brown, RAO volunteers.



RAO Photo

Col. Frank Gallegos, 30th Space Wing commander, speaks with retirees during his visit to the Retiree Activities Office.

TRICARE toll-free numbers updated

Toll-free numbers have been updated with new hours of operation for the TRICARE call center as well as toll-free numbers and supporting links to TRICARE On-line and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. The new hours are: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Eastern time (excluding federal holidays).

TRICARE Management Activity National Toll-Free Numbers are:

- ◆ TRICARE Prime Remote (888) 363-2273 (active duty and family members)
- ◆ Senior Pharmacy Program (877) 363-6337
- ◆ TRICARE For Life (888) 363-5433
- ◆ TRICARE Online (866) 363-3932
- ◆ HIPAA (888) 363-4472 (Source: TMA)

Korean War remembered

WASHINGTON (July 7, 2003) - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi encourages Americans to honor the 3.7 million living veterans of the Korean War era on July 27, the 50th anniversary of the armistice that ended the conflict, and to remember the sacrifices of all who served in the military during the Korean War.

Big Brothers Big Sisters seeks "Bigs"

Big Brothers Big Sisters seeks to make a positive difference in the lives of children by promoting their self-esteem, expanding their awareness of life's opportunities, and providing them with guidance and support through long-term, one-to-one mentorships with caring adult volunteers.

Big Brothers Big Sisters is one of a number of programs serving

children and families on the Central Coast. Volunteers spend a few hours a week with their "Littles," ages 7 to 17, doing projects, helping with homework, playing sports and pursuing common interests. The "Bigs" are persons 18 and over from a variety of backgrounds who are caring and responsible and can provide a positive role model for young people.

The program staff carefully screens, trains and matches volunteers and children in their local area as well as providing ongoing supervision. More information about Big Brothers Big Sisters can be obtained by calling: 965-1001 in Santa Barbara, 735-4376 in Lompoc, 925-1100 in Santa Maria and 781-3226 in San Luis Obispo. (Source: Big Brothers Big Sisters)

Health improvement classes offered

By CAROL MORENO

30th Medical Group

The 30th Medical Group continues supporting the health and wellness of all Tricare beneficiaries through a broader risk reduction education program. The Risk Reduction Series provides group and individual education to individuals with high blood cholesterol, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

Classes are held at the 30th Med Group in the internal medicine clinic, the first three Thursday afternoons of each month from 2 to 4 p.m. The monthly topic schedule covers Heart Healthy for Cholesterol, Diabetes Meal Planning and Lifestyle Changes, and High Blood Pressure and Dietary/Lifestyle Actions to Stop Hypertension.

- The cholesterol education is based on the current National Cholesterol Education Program.
- The diabetes education is based on current American Diabetes Association recommendations and incorporates carbohydrate counting and blood sugar monitoring management.

- The high blood pressure education is based on recent National Institute of Health finding from the Dietary Actions to Stop Hypertension research, or DASH Diet.
- Educational materials are provided for each series to help in making long term diet and lifestyle modifications.

This health improvement program is designed to help individuals better understand and self manage in order to reduce the risk of complications related to these conditions. The importance of this type of health promotion intervention is increasing as a greater percentage of the U.S population is affected by these three conditions.

Heart disease and stroke are, respectively, the first and third leading causes of death in the United States, with high blood cholesterol, diabetes, and hypertension being well-established risks factors.

Persons are encouraged to self-refer into the series or they may be referred by their medical provider. For more information, for class dates or to sign up please call the Health and Wellness Center at 606-2221.

TRICARE enhances dental benefits

Under a new five-year dental contract between the Department of Defense and the Delta Dental Plan of California, dental benefits for uniformed services retirees and family members enrolled in the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program have been enhanced.

Beginning May 1, 2003, the mandatory enrollment period was reduced from 24 to 12 months. The annual maximum benefit per enrollee and lifetime maximum benefit for orthodontic care was increased from \$1000 to \$1200.

After the mandatory enrollment period ends, eligible enrollees which include uniformed services retirees and their family members; Medal of Honor recipients and their family members; and survivors and family members of deceased retirees or active duty sponsors who served on active duty for more than 30 consecutive days, may continue their enrollment in the TRDP on a month-to-month basis.

During the mandatory 12-month enrollment period, TRDP enrollees are covered for basic restorative services, periodontics,

endodontics, oral surgery and dental emergencies. After 12 months of continuous enrollment, TRDP enrollees are covered for cast crowns, cast restorations, full and partial dentures and orthodontics for adults and children (A co-payment is required).

As an incentive, sponsors and family members who enroll within 120 days of the sponsor's retirement from active duty receive an extra benefit. They and their family members are covered by the enhanced dental services starting the day they enroll. Sponsors and family members who wait and enroll after the 120 day period are not eligible for the enhanced dental services until they complete the mandatory 12 months of continuous TRDP enrollment.

The TRDP is a voluntary dental program with enrollee-paid premiums deducted automatically each month from the sponsor's retired military pay. If retired military pay is not available, sponsors and family members can arrange with

See Dental Page 7

COLA estimated at 2 percent

With a drifting economy, the Consumer Price Index has fluctuated all year. This makes it uncertain what the 2004 Cost of Living Adjustment will be for military retirees and survivors, Social Security annuitants, and disabled veterans.

Compared to the baseline for the last quarter of Fiscal Year 2002 (July through September), the CPI had increased 1.9 percent through April. But consumer prices declined in May - dropping the cumulative CPI increase to 1.6 percent for the year through May. With four months to go in this fiscal year, the January COLA figure is estimated to be in the vicinity of 2 percent. (Source: FRA)

Vietnam Cross of Gallantry awarded

The Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm was awarded to all members of the Armed Forces of the United States and other nations for valorous achievement in combat during the Vietnam conflict, March 1, 1961 through March 28, 1973. It is the equivalent of the French Croix de Guerre. The medal is a symbol of gratitude to the American and Allied soldiers who once worked, fought and sacrificed themselves for the freedom of the Republic of Vietnam.

The Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross was established by the Vietnamese Government by Decree No. 74-b/QT, dated Aug. 15, 1950 and Decree No. 96/DQT/HC, dated May 2, 1952. Authorization for all U.S. Army personnel was confirmed in HDQA General Orders No. 8, dated March 19, 1974. Authorization for other branches of the military defers to the Army authorization date.

U.S. Military units were individually cited for award of the

RVN Gallantry Cross; however, the Vietnamese Government issued the award to all units subordinate to Military Assistance Command Vietnam during the period Feb. 8, 1962 and March 28, 1973 and to U.S. Army Vietnam and its subordinate units for the period July 20, 1965 to March 28, 1973. This permits all personnel who served in Vietnam to wear the RVN Gallantry Cross unit citation.

The Cross of Gallantry was awarded by the Army of South Vietnam to both individuals and to units. When awarded to individuals it was awarded with Silver Star (the equivalent to the U.S. Army Silver Star) or with Bronze Star (equivalent to the U.S. Bronze Star). When awarded to units it is awarded on Army Level (Palm), Corps Level (Gold Star), Division Level (Silver Star) and Brigade Level (Bronze Laurel Leaf or Palm).

As with U.S. unit awards, all personnel in the unit during the period of action for which the

award is given may wear the award at all times. Individuals not in the unit during the designated period wear the award only while assigned to the unit. As a foreign decoration, the Vietnamese Cross may not be worn unless it is approved by the U.S. Department of State. That approval was passed to the Department of the Army and a General Order for the award published, in this case DA GO 43, 1970.

The following are authorized components of the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross:

a. A gold-color medal, 1 3/8 inches in width, consisting of a wreath superimposed by two crossed scimitars saltirewise and a Maltese cross. In the center of the Maltese cross a disc with an outline of the country of Vietnam between two palm sprigs joined at the bottom and a scroll overall inscribed "QUOC-GIA LAO-TUONG" (Reward of the State).

b. A miniature-size medal
c. A ribbon 1 3/8 inches wide and consisting of the following stripes: 3/8 inch Old Glory Red; center 5/8 inch Golden with 16 strands of Old Glory Red; and 3/8 inch Old Glory Red.

d. Streamers awarded to cited units inscribed as indicated on the unit's lineage and honors.

The Vietnamese Cross is not issued by any U.S. agency but is available commercially (see below). An amended discharge document - DD215 - can be issued if the citation is not included on the retiree's DD214. To request an amendment, the retiree should submit a Standard Form 180 to the National Personnel Records Command.

Additional information about the Cross of Gallantry can be obtained by contacting:

Records Chief (REC-AMW)
The American War Library
16907 Brighton Avenue
Gardena CA 90247-5420

(Source: American War Library)

“Agents” may shop for some commissary patrons

Although it's not a new policy, eligible commissary patrons who are unable to shop in the commissary on their own may have an “agent” designated to shop for them. Known as the agent privilege, it is for any authorized commissary shopper who needs assistance shopping or who cannot shop on his or her own behalf because of disability, illness or infirmity.

Thanks to not-widely-known commissary directives, children can continue to enter the confines of any commissary as long as they are accompanied by an adult. The military does not require children less than 10 years old to have an identification card and an approved agent may accompany those separated from parents and act on their behalf.

The Defense Commissary Agency or the local commissary do not grant this privilege. Agent privilege is authorized by the installation commander who controls who enters the installation. The agent does not have to be an authorized commissary shopper. The military member may request an agent pass for approval to allow an individual to enter the installation. Non-military primary caregivers should contact the identification card section on the installation to determine what legal documents, i.e., power of attorney, may also be needed to establish proof of caregiver status.

At the same time, the individual can also ask what documents are

required to enter the installation. Upon verification of caregiver status, the individual receives written authorization from the commander's representative designating him/her as an “agent” to accompany the children. Usually, the letter is for a 12-month period, but it can be extended in cases of continued hardship.

Authorized shoppers who are elderly or disabled, and unfamiliar with the ‘agent’ privilege, are urged to contact the identification card section to determine what proof is needed to have an agent shop in the commissary on their behalf. Blind and severely disabled patrons may obtain a letter of authorization designating a person of their choice to accompany and assist them, or to shop on their behalf.

Authority for agent shoppers is contained in DeCA Directive 55-3, which establishes the agency's procedures for providing reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities.

Vandenberg commissary patrons who qualify and desire to take advantage of this procedure, can call the 30th Services Squadron at 606-0405 for an appointment. The hours of operation are workdays from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The patron, if able, and the prospective agent should go together to the office in Bldg. 11013 (across California Blvd. from Bldg. 11777). The patron must have a military identification card and the agent a photo ID. (Source: AFRN, DeCA Website)

Co-payment Refunds Certain Veterans May Be Eligible

The Department of Veterans Affairs, and USAA and Hartford Insurance Companies have reached a settlement in regard to veterans who made co-payments for treatment they received at VA facilities from 1995 through 2001. Veterans who were insured by USAA or Hartford Insurance Companies between Jan. 1, 1995 and Dec. 31, 2001, and made co-payments, may be eligible for a refund. The VA Health Revenue Center is processing those claims for refunds.

The settlement was reached between VA, Hartford and USAA earlier this year, as a result of several years of litigation. The settlement involved payments for care provided by VA to insured veterans with Medicare or Tricare supplemental coverage. Veterans insured by Hartford or USAA who paid VA co-payments for VA medical care they received from Jan. 1, 1995 through Dec. 31, 2001 may apply to VA for a refund of their co-payments on a first-come, first-served basis. All requests for refunds must be postmarked by April 1, 2004.

Veterans who may be eligible for refunds will receive a claims form by mail from the VA and the insurance companies. Other veterans who believe they may be eligible for a refund may obtain a claims form by either calling a special toll-free number (866) 258-2772 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., ET, Monday – Friday, or by downloading the form, at the VA

website at <http://www.va.gov/huva/claim%20form.pdf>. Or, you can stop by the Retiree Activities Office and a volunteer will download the form for you.

All claim applications must be mailed (fax or email submissions will not be accepted) to:

Dept. of Veterans Affairs
Health Revenue Center
ATTN: USAA/Hartford
Claim Applications
3401 SW 21st Street, Bldg. 9
Topeka, KS 66604-3302

Payments that were made for inpatient, outpatient and long-term care are covered under the settlement. Pharmacy co-payments are not eligible for refund. Veterans only need to provide dates of treatment and identify the VA facilities where treatment was received.

If the veteran is now deceased, the claim may be filed by the designated executor/executrix of the estate. Include a copy of the document designating the applicant as the executor/executrix of the estate along with the claim. The same situation applies for one holding a Power of Attorney for the family member who is unable to make decisions. Visit <http://va.gov/huva/> for more complete information. (Source: www.va.gov)

Congress encourages display of Blue Star Banner

Retirees, as well as all Americans, with a family member serving in the U.S. Armed Forces are encouraged to display the Blue Star Banner, under a concurrent resolution that has been introduced by Rep. John Shadegg (Rep. Ariz.). H.Con.Res. 109, expressing the sense of the Congress regarding the Blue Star Banner and the Gold Star, has been

approved by the House and Senate.

The Blue Star Banner was patented and designed in 1917, during the height of the World War I, by Army Capt. Robert L. Queissner of the 5th Ohio Infantry, who had two sons serving on the front lines. The banner was displayed widely during the World War II and continued during the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf Wars and other periods of conflict as well as in times of peace.

The Blue Star signifies the living, and a smaller Gold Star is placed on top of the Blue Star, forming a blue border, if the fam-

ily member was killed or died while on active duty, to symbolize his or her sacrifice for the cause of freedom.

Printable banners may be downloaded free from American Legion's website at www.legion.org or the Blue Star Mothers' website at www.bluestarmothers.org.

For those wishing cloth banners, they are available for purchase at the Legion's website, the Veterans of Foreign Wars' website at www.vfw.org or at www.serviceflags.com.

(Compiled from Library of Congress, Navy League and websites referred to above)

Government grave marker requests made easier

The Department of Veterans Affairs has revised its application form to make requesting a VA grave marker easier. The new form, Application For Standard Government Headstone or Marker, includes updated information about changes that expand eligibility for a government marker. VA Form 40-1330 and instruction sheets also permit better communication between VA and veterans' families.

For deaths on or after Sept. 11, 2001, Public Laws 107-103 and 107-330 made government markers available for use on veterans' graves that were already marked with privately furnished headstones or markers. Earlier information set the effective date as Dec. 27, 2001, which was the law's enactment date. Previous law prevented VA from furnishing markers when a grave was already marked.

The laws require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to report to Congress by Feb. 1, 2006, on the effec-

tiveness of this benefit and to recommend whether it should continue. One of the changes made to the application form will allow VA to report on this new benefit by tracking its use.

The VA has introduced a toll-free fax service at (800) 455-7143 for submitting applications. This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as an alternative to regular mail. Complete instructions are on the VA website at <http://www.cem.va.gov/hmform>. The application form is available for downloading on the website at <http://www.cem.va.gov/pdf/401330.pdf>

Questions about a headstone or marker application can be directed to VA's Memorial Programs Service applicant assistance unit at (800)-697-6947. Markers are furnished for veterans' graves worldwide, generally within 60 days of VA receiving the application. (Source: AFRN, VA)

Help for Job Applicants

The Department of Defense has set up a new office to help lure job applicants to the federal workforce. The Defense Application Assistance Office has been established to help those seeking government positions.

USAJOBS website provides worldwide job vacancy information that is updated each day from a database of more than 17,000 worldwide job opportunities.

USAJOBS gives the maximum flexibility in performing one-stop employment searches. It's convenient, user-friendly, accessible to persons with disabilities, and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Interested job seekers can read more at <http://www.go-defense.com>. USAJOBS can also be accessed through an automated telephone system by calling (478) 757-3000 or TDD (478) 744-2299. (Source: USAJOBS/MOAA)

Dental from Page 4

Delta Dental to pay the monthly premiums either by mail or by electronic fund transfer.

Under the TRDP, there is a \$50 deductible per enrollee, with a \$150 yearly deductible per family. Premiums vary depending on where enrollees live and the number of family members they choose to enroll. During the enrollment period May 1, 2003, to April 30, 2004, enrollees pay approximately \$22 to \$37 a month for single coverage, \$42 to \$71 for two or \$71 to \$120 for a family of three or more.

Enrollees may seek dental care from any licensed dentist or specialist within the TRDP coverage area. To minimize out-of-pocket expenses, enrollees are encouraged to seek dental care from more than 67,000 participating dental providers. A directory of participating Delta Dental providers is available online at www.ddpdelta.org. Retirees and family members may also request a provider directory by calling the Delta Dental Customer Service number at (888) 838-8737. Additional information on the TRDP is available on the TRICARE Web site at: www.tricare.osd.mil/dental. (Source: TMA)

End most telemarketer calls

Retirees can now sign up for the National Do Not Call Registry operated by the Federal Trade Commission to avoid many of the unwanted telemarketing calls at home. It's easy. It's quick. It's free.

More than 2 million Californians have pre-registered through Attorney General's Internet service. If you pre-registered, your telephone numbers have been forwarded for inclusion in the national no-call list and you need not register again for five years unless you change your telephone number.

The FTC will enforce the no-call restrictions beginning Oct. 1, 2003. If you register by Aug. 31, 2003, you will start receiving fewer telemarketing calls beginning in October. After Oct. 1, telemarketers have up to three months from the date you register to remove your telephone number from their list and stop calling you.

Some types of calls are exempt. Political organizations, charities, telephone surveyors and the business of insurance, to the extent that it is regulated by state law, are permitted to call you. Organizations with which you have an established business re-

lationship can call you for up to 18 months after your last purchase, payment or delivery - even if your name is on the National Do Not Call Registry. And companies to which you've made an inquiry or submitted an application can call you for three months.

Unfortunately, there have been some who have tried to take advantage of consumers so you should be careful and check the legitimacy of Do Not Call lists to protect your privacy and personal information. The California Attorney General already has shut down a bogus operation where scam artists sought to take illegal advantage of consumers. The FCC also has issued a consumer alert on identity theft scams taking improper advantage of Do Not Call registry programs.

If you have an active internet email address, you can register at <http://www.donotcall.gov/>. In addition to on-line registrations, the FTC is taking telephone sign-ups. You must call from the phone you want to register. Call toll-free: (888) 382-1222. The hearing impaired can call TTY (866) 290-4236. You can register your home and mobile phone numbers. (Compiled from FTC and CA AG websites)

DoD Plans to Consolidate Exchanges

The Department of Defense announced a multi-year effort to consolidate the three Armed Services Exchange Systems (NEXCOM, MCX and AAFES). C. J. Wax, director of the Unified Exchange Task Force, recently outlined the initiative for representatives from military and veterans' organizations.

According to Wax, the consolidation might reduce costs to exchange customers and, more importantly, "improve the dividends that go back into the MWR programs." The consolidation would be "largely transparent" to customers, who would not see an obvious change in operations.

The Military Coalition has supported the individual services' decision to adopt recent resource sharing and other cooperative measures, but maintain separate exchange systems. There is concern about the impact on patrons, equitable distribution of MWR dividends and the consolidation's effect on dozens of Ships' Stores.

(Source: FRA)

Mark your calendars!

Retiree Activities Center

There will be no **third Thursday** of month meeting in the Retiree Activities Center during July and August. Meetings will resume with a potluck luncheon Sept. 18 beginning at noon followed by a guest speaker at 1 p.m. The site is Building 10364 – Base Exchange area, across from the Home & Garden Shop where retirees, spouses and widows gather to hear guest speakers, socialize and enjoy cookies and coffee. The schedule is as follows:

Sept. 18 -- Thursday -- Fall Potluck Luncheon

***Nov. 15 -- Saturday** -- Retiree Appreciation Day

***Dec. 11-- Thursday** -- Holiday Potluck Luncheon

*Denotes different date than third Thursday of the month and for Appreciation Day different location.

NOTE: Speakers are subject to change. Please check the *Space & Missile Times* for details as days come closer. Also, listen to KUHL Tuesdays at 8:20 a.m. for current news on events; and watch for flyers posted at the Retiree Activities Center.

Society of Military Widows

The SMW, Central Coast Chapter 44, meets the second Wednesday of each month in the Retiree Activities Center. The ladies have a **business meeting** that begins at **1 p.m.**; usually, followed by a **guest speaker at 2 p.m.** The retirees and spouses frequently attend the informative lecture sessions. **Military widows, retirees and spouses are invited.**

Tickets, Tours, Cruises

Vandenberg Leisure Tours is in Building 10122, the Services Center, located near the corner of California Boulevard and Washington Avenue. It offers a wide variety of excursions to suit every taste. In addition, the tour office lists favorable rates at hotels and motels in the vicinity of Southern California theme parks and Los Angeles Airport. Active duty, retired military, and civil service personnel, government contractors, families, and guests are eligible to participate. The office publishes the Tripleletter listing upcoming events. You can learn more about opportunities by calling (805) 606-7976 and asking to be placed on the mailing list. The address is P.O. Box 5459, Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437-0459. You might also visit their website at <http://www.30svs.com/index2.html>. Click on Downloads and then Upcoming Tours. For complete information on the following upcoming trips, contact the tour office.

July 20-25	Mammoth Mountain, \$385 per person sharing
Aug. 1-15	Rhine River and Switzerland, call
Aug. 21	42nd Street, \$105, orchestra seating
Aug. 23	Roaring Camp Train/Barbecue, \$75
Sept. 7-10	San Diego, \$325 sharing, \$395 single
Sept. 14-17	Catalina, \$298 sharing, \$422 single
Sept. 21-Oct. 1	Canada and New England, call
Sept. 25	The Producers, \$105
Oct. 8-16	Great Smokey Mountains, \$1,879 sharing
Oct. 20-24	Ensenada Cruise, \$335-\$665
Nov. 13-15	Palm Springs Follies, \$245 sharing, \$370 single
Nov. 20-23	San Francisco, \$240 sharing, \$370 single

Letter to the Editor

I just received my first issue of Retiree Times. It was very informative and helpful. As a brand new retiree, I have a lot to learn about my benefits and privileges. One question, may I get my re-

tiree ID card and one for my wife and minor daughter at the base? What do I need to do to get it? Thank you.
Gary Lange
COL, USAR Retired
Via E-mail

Retiree Activities Center

Building 10364, Base Exchange Area
Office Hours: Tuesday through Friday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Closed Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Federal Holidays
(805) 606-5474

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747 Nebraska Ave. Suite A-200
Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437-6261
Official Business

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Arlington honors detailed

According to the Arlington National Cemetery Public Affairs Office, each service dictates what honors will be provided. The following is an overview of honors available.

Enlisted — Standard graveside honors can be provided by the appropriate branch of service. The cemetery staff will arrange for the military honors when are requested. The honors will include body bearers (pall bearers), firing party and a bugler. A military chaplain may be scheduled by the cemetery staff unless the family minister is desired and provided by the next-of-kin or the funeral home. Additional honors as follows may be available for certain E-9's depending on the branch of service:

- Army: Color guard, drummer, "3 by 6" (18-member) platoon and caisson
- Air Force: Full honors including color guard, band and caisson
- Navy: Full honors including color guard, band and caisson
- Marine Corps: Standard honors, families may request a caisson
- Coast Guard: Standard honors

Commissioned and Warrant Officers — In addition to the standard graveside honors provided above, the caisson, band, and escort troops may be scheduled by the cemetery staff, if requested. For Army and Marine O-6 and higher, the riderless horse is used. For Flag Officers (Navy, Coast Guard, and Marines), the Minute Guns are provided. For Flag Officers (Army, Navy, Coast Guard, and Marines), the Gun Salute is provided.

Certified active military service — Former members of a group that has been certified as active military service for the purpose of receiving veteran benefits under Section 401 of Public Law 95-202 and are therefore entitled to inurnment in the Columbarium are now deemed entitled to military honors as well and will be provided such honors when requested. The honors will include body bearers (pallbearers), firing party, and a bugler. A military chaplain may be scheduled by the cemetery staff unless the family minister is desired and provided by the next-of-kin or the funeral home.

Dependents with no military service — The cemetery staff will arrange for body bearers and the family may request a military chaplain. (Source: ANC website/FRA)

Retiree Times address corrections

The mailing list for this newsletter is maintained by the Retiree Activities Office based on input from the Defense Manpower Data Center and other sources as well as input directly from addressees. Please make any corrections necessary on the label above, clip and return to the

RAO. In the event the retiree is deceased, indicate date and given name of surviving spouse. We want to continue to send the newsletter to the widow/widower. The mailing address of the RAO is shown below. You may also send e-mail to: retirees.office@vandenberg.af.mil.